2.

LINES

ON THE

MASSACRE OF OSZMIANA.

"Le glaive a passé et repassé. Entendez vous ces cris déchirants? Ce sont les plaintes des jeunes épouses, et les lamentations des mères.

.. ..

"Seigneur, seigneur, votre courroux sera-t-il éternel? Votre bras ne s'étendra-t-il jamais que pour frapper? Epargnez les pères a cause des enfants. Laissez vous attendrir aux pleurs de ces pauvres petites créatures qui ne savent pas encore distinguer leur main gauche de la droite."

AUTEUR FRANÇAIS.

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LINES

ON THE

MASSACRE OF OSZMIANA.(1)

Sad! sad! thy lot, brave Poland! thine are woes
Too deep for minstrel's song or storied page!
Ah! stay thy hand, fell tyrant! strike no more
A prostrate nation! Glory dost thou seek?
Is't not enough, ambitious Emperor,
That thou hast crushed a people great and brave?
Must thy strange thirst for fame new glories earn
In trampling on the vanquished? See'st thou not
The hand of fate, fond mortal, o'er thee raised?
Thou dread'st it not; yet what if it should smite!
Should tear from off thy brow the inglorious wreath
That more thou prid'st thyself upon than e'en
The imperial diadem! yet that how fair,
Save for oppression's stain deep wrought in it.
Oppression! term too mild for deeds like thine:
More fitting far were foul Tartarean speech,
To chronicle thy catalogue of crimes.
Witness ye fields of slain that reek to heaven.
Not warriors only fallen in glorious fight
For homes and country;---darker, baser still;
Defenceless women, mothers, tender babes,---(2)
The victims of thy scathing tyranny.
Speak Oszmiana! thou a tale canst tell
Most horrible! Say on that awful morn

What fate befell thee, when, as tolled for prayer
The solemn bell, thy sons the temple thronged.
Peasant and peer before the altar knelt,
Heaven's all-powerful aid for thee imploring,
Poland! The burthen of their fervent prayer,
Mercy for thee,---for Lithuania!
There knelt the warrior, his bright armour doffed;
There knelt the faithful wife, the matron grave;
Many a beauteous maiden too was there,
And lovely childhood lisping holiest prayers;
Appears the aged Priest in suppliant mood,
Presenting unto God a people's vows;
And now throughout the spacious dome is heard
The hallowed harmony of sacred song,
Devotion's strains, well worthy angel's care,
And borne aloft on angel wings to heaven.
But hark! what fearful sounds! The clash of arms!
Thunders the Russian fire, and loud resounds
The trampling of Cossack steeds. On they come!
A sanguinary band the porch have crossed.
Forward they rush, each with his flaming brand!
Nor age nor sex they spare! nor infant's cry,
Nor women's shriek, nor aged men's rebuke
Their rage can stay! Barbarians! cease they not
Until remain but corses of the dead!
Age, beauty, youth, and strength, promiscuous heaped
~~Amid the streams of their unpitied gore!~~
'Mid ghastly floods, and sight! of streaming gore!

The shrine profaned, the manes of the slain,
The wasted home, the hearth made desolate,
The widow's moan, the wretched orphan's tear,
Cry loud to heaven,---but not on them, vile slaves!
For vengeance! abject minions of the Czar,
They knew not what they did. Spare, then, great God!
That dastard soldiery, of dire decrees
The blind executors. Rather on him
Who sent them forth, a savage, ruthless horde,
To waste and to destroy,---on him, the fiend!
Thine anger fall. 'Gainst him by whose command(3)
Thy chosen altars fell, thy people bled,

'Gainst him the torrent of thy wrath discharge!
'Tis time he knew that thou art God all just,
Omnipotent, avenging innocence.

Of blood enough! will ne'er oppression cease?
Tell us, ye dead, in tens of thousands slain!
Children of captive Prague, that fell erewhile(4)
The victims of Suwarroff's cruel doom!
Or ye that under Stuman's ruined walls,(5)
By Russian steel perfidious bled of old
Inglorious; and ye, champions of Warsaw,
Who in the mortal conflict fell renowned,
Struggling for freedom. Rouse ye! arm once more
For Poland! Haste! your fallen country calls!
Oh! once again your swords, your valour lend!
But no! Be hushed bold thought. If Heaven decrees(6)
On Poland still its awful wrath to pour,---
If expiatory blood must flow afresh,
Take ours, Just God, but spare our father-land.

'Tis thus where'er he roams, the Exile prays;
Whether on cold Kamtschatka's plains remote,
Or 'mid Siberia's everlasting snows,
Or doomed in mines to unavailing toil,
Or treads he uncontrolled proud Albion's shores,
That scorn the tread of serf; or, mingling oft
In cities vast with busy prosperous throngs
Of Britain's sons,—Poland forgets he not.
So Juda's race of old, 'midst regal pomp,
Or in the lonely wilderness afar,
Sion remembered. Ne'er was tuned their lyre
To notes of gladness. Nought could gild their chains.
Not the bright glories of Baltassar's reign,
Nor splendours of imperial Babylon,
Nor maddening luxury of Eastern clime,
Nor fondest homage of admiring sage,
Their hearts could win, or from their minds efface
The dear remembrance of their native land.
By Babel's streams they wandered oft and wept,
Their harps upon the willows idly hung.

No other song their sorrowing voices knew
Than strains of wo :—" Refuse our tongue to speak!
Our right hand wither, or forget its strength,
If we forget thee, O Jerusalem !"
Thus oft the captive mourned. Just heaven re-
Hark ! the prophetic voice of freedom tells! [lents.
" *Appear my Cyrus !* on to glorious deeds !
Annul my people's long captivity !
Give them once more their altar, country, homes !"
Oh ! that such deeds our age would imitate !
Much-boasted age ! may never cease the praise
Of thy achievements ! Boundless thy renown !
But there awaits thee yet a brighter wreath.
Oft hast thou struck the fetters from the slave ;
Oft made the usages of savage states
To mercy, truth, benevolence give place.
In art and science rich, the elements
Obey thee! But be this no more thy pride!
Shame on thee! Infamy indelible !
If thou arise not now in majesty,
A captive people's cause to vindicate.
Be great, and bid another Cyrus reign !

NOTES.

NOTE 1.—" Oszmiana is a small town in Lithuania, a property of the Prince of Sapieha. The massacre had not occurred after, or in consequence of, a battle, for it took place in April; and it was not before the first day of June, that we contrived to penetrate into Lithuania to give support to the insurrection of the Lithuanians, and to give impulse to other Polish provinces under the Russian sway. I was also of the *corps d'armée*, and the last battle which opened to us a free passage to Lithuania, we gained the 29th of May, 1831. But the massacre was ordered in order to punish the inhabitants who had harboured the insurgents, provided them with victuals, and facilitated their retreat, whilst pursued by the enemy." It is also related, that " after the massacre, ear-rings were offered for sale with pieces of the ear still attached to them, and fingers with rings on them."—*Polish Correspondence.*

NOTE 2.—" Defenceless women, mothers, tender babes,—
The victims of thy scathing, tyranny."

" In the beginning of May, 1832, 600 children were carried away in the night in four different detachments. On the 17th, a convoy of children was despatched in open day. Everywhere were heard the cries and lamentations of the unhappy mothers, running after the waggons on which their children were placed; some of them attempting to throw themselves under the wheels, that they might not outlive the separation from all that was dear to them in the world. It was there that might have been heard the exclamation of the Polish mother, which has resounded throughout Europe —" OH! THAT HE (THE CZAR) COULD DROWN HIMSELF IN OUR TEARS!" On the 18th, the children found in the streets at work or selling different wares, were carried off;

and on the 19th, the parochial and charity schools, and the orphan institution called the infant Jesus, in which alone there were several hundred children, were emptied, and the whole of their infant inmates hurried away, never to return. That many must have perished on the march cannot well be doubted, for the caravan could not stop for them if taken sick or worn out with fatigue; but this does not remain a matter of conjecture. Eye-witnesses have borne testimony to their having seen the dead bodies of children extended near the public roads, by the crust of bread which had been left with them, but which they had not had the strength to touch. Nature had no part in the death of those unhappy children—those slaughtered innocents. Oh! since the days of Herod, no such scenes have been acted on the theatre of the world! To add, if possible, to the frightful picture, it is stated that, notwithstanding the loss of children—calculated to be upwards of three-fourths during the journey—the number arrived complete, as the Cossacks seized and carried off any children they met with, to replace those that had died during the journey; and that the account current of death and robbery was settled daily."—*From a Speech of the Right Hon. R. C. Ferguson, M.P., in the House of Commons, 9th July*, 1833.

"Pursuant to an ukase, it (the Russian government) sweeps off transports of Polish children into the interior of Russia; it orders children to be flogged in public places, for reading Polish poetry; it surrenders Polish daughters to the brutality of its soldiery, for singing patriotic songs; and drives fathers to infanticide and suicide, to save their offspring from shame. The government makes sport of the most tender and most sacred family affections."—*From a work on Education in Poland, published in* 1833.

The same work gives several instances of these shocking atrocities. We shall quote the following, as proofs of the wise and paternal care of the Czar in promoting civilization amongst his Polish subjects:—

"Three young ladies, whose parents lived in the country, had been placed in a principal boarding school of the capital. In a leisure hour, when walking in the garden, they had sung some patriotic stanzas of a well-known Polish air. A spy, who chanced to pass by, overheard the song, and made a report of the occurrence to the police. Immediately gens d'armes were sent, with an order to bring the unfortunate girls to the hotel of the municipality, where, after flogging, they were surrendered to the brutality of the gens d'armes. The director who gave that order was Storensko, a Russian general, who has lately received an estate from the Emperor Nicholas, in reward of his services,—among which this probably was one."

"A gentleman from the Palatinate of Kalish, who, in consequence of the late revolution, had been imprisoned for a twelvemonth or longer at Warsaw, had obtained permission to visit his brother, an influential functionary, once more before his departure for Siberia. Escorted to his brother's house, he unfortunately did not find him at home—he found only his children. On seeing his little nieces, in the expansion of his heart he approached the eldest to kiss her on the forehead. The child not recognising her uncle,—for he was emaciated by long suffering, and his beard was grown shaggy and long,—pushed him back with a shriek, 'Away, thou Muscovite!' The Russian officer who had accompanied him, (mark what Russian officers are!) reported what he had heard and seen to his superiors. The parents were summoned before field-marshal Paskewitch. The father was discharged his office and imprisoned, because, as the governor said, he had educated his children in hatred towards Russia; the distracted mother, from some recollection she had of the generosity of a tyrant in the East, on a similar occasion, endeavoured to exculpate the child by stating that she was a lunatic, and that just then she had been in one of her fits. The excuse was not lost on the magnanimity of the viceroy of Warsaw. He ordered the poor child to be carried to the lunatic asylum, to have her head shaved and cold water to be poured over it."

NOTE 3.———'Gainst him by whose command
Thy chosen altars fell, &c.

"Through the agony of the infants, forgive, O Lord, those murderers the sacrilege of thy holy temple! for the slaves of the Czar, like the Roman soldiery, *knew not what they did*. But, in the hour of judgment, let thy anger not pass away; let thy thunderbolts strike him who let loose those hordes,—who ordered that slaughter, and who sheds innocent blood every day."—*Polish Author.*

NOTE 4.—"Children of captive Prague, that fell erewhile."

"Besides Stuman, there is the massacre of Prague, (called in the Polish language, *Praga*,) mentioned, in 1793 or 1794. This is indifferent; it was, however, at the time of the last partition of Poland. The famous monster, Suwarroff, having taken Prague by assault, put every soul to the sword. Thirteen thousand persons of every age and sex perished. People saw, from the windows of Warsaw, cossacks carrying infants on their lances."—*From the letter of a distinguished Emigrant.*

NOTE 5.—Or ye that under Stuman's ruined walls.

"As to the extermination, fully intended and systematically conducted by the Empress Catherine, it was in 1769. Stuman is a town in Ukraine; but I will give you here the words of the French historian Rhulière:"—"La plupart des gentilshommes Polonais avaient alors (en 1769) abandonné leurs maisons pour combattre les Russes. La Podolie était absolument sans défense. Les Zaporogues (les Kosaks) furent avertis par les édits de Catherine. Elle se plaignait dans ces édits que les polonais lui faisaient la guerre *en haine de la religion grecque*, ayant soin d'unir les Juifs aux Polonais, afin que ceux-ci se trouvassent confondus dans la même haine. Les Zaporogues sortirent de leurs retraites, sous le commandement de leur chef, Zelezniak. Ils montrèrent aux officiers Russes les édits de l'impératrice qui autorisaient leurs incursions. Ils étoient précédés des missionnaires Russes qui allaient partout prêcher le même Evangile aux paysans Polonais. Ils avançaient en les soulevant. Les Zaporogues fournissaient des armes aux paysans, et ceux-ci les conduisaient de maison en maison. Tout ce qui n'était pas de la religion grecque, vieillards, femmes, enfants, gentilshommes, valets, moines, artizans, juifs et luthériens, tout fut massacré. Toute la noblesse, éparse dans ses maisons en Ukraïne, y fut égorgée. Les juifs, plus haïs à cause de leurs concussions, furent presque tous brulés vifs. Ces scélérats s'amusaient à pendre, aux mêmes potences, un gentilhomme, un moine, un juif, et un chien, avec cette inscription: *c'est tout un.* Une de leurs troupes enterra tout vifs, et près les uns des autres, plusieurs centaines d'hommes, de manière que les têtes de ces malheureux poussassent hors de terre, et ensuite ils les fauchèrent comme les herbes d'un champ. Si un inconnu leur tombait entre les mains et qu'ils le soupçonnassent de cacher sa naissance ou sa religion, ils le forçaient de massacrer les gentilshommes et les prêtres. Tout ce qui pouvait fuir prit la fuite. On ne rencontrait plus, dans les villages, que femmes égorgées, enfants écrasés sous les pieds des chevaux. Un malheureux, échappé de ce carnage, traversa des villages dont les puits étaient comblés de cadavres d'enfants. Trois villes, cinquante bourgs et plusieurs milliers de maisons éparses dans la campagne furent brulées. Il restait encore la petite ville de *Stuman*, un peu fortifiée, appartenant au palatin de Kiiow. Une foule de femmes, d'enfants et de vieillards, abandonnés sans défense, s'étaient refugiés dans les murs de cette ville; c'était le dépôt des effets précieux de cette province. On fit un complot horrible pour surprendre ces infortunés. Le général russe, commandant alor dans cette contrée, y participa. Le complot réussit; on ordonna aux malheureux habitants d'apporter sur la place publique tous leurs effets, tout leur argent pour racheter leur vie. Cet ordre executé, le massacre commence avec le pillage de tout ce qui était resté dans les maisons. Seize mille personnes de tout age, de tout sexe furent égorgées. Enfin, un éveque Russe vint de Russie établir se réligion dans cette malheureuse contrée, dont la possession avait toujours été ambitionnée par la Russie, et ce fut ainsi que toutes les autres religions y furent éteintes et la domination Russe établie."—*Id.*

NOTE 6.————If Heaven decrees
On Poland still its awful wrath to pour.

"To soothe the anger of Heaven if Polish blood is wanted, oh! it did and does flow in abundance. To wash off our sins take ours, O Christ! but restore to life our fatherland!"—*Polish Author.*

The above is taken—as is also the extract, note 3—from the literal translation of a Polish poem of forty lines, kindly presented by a gentleman who bore a distinguished part in the battle, or rather the battles, of Warsaw.

"The spirit of nationality burns as brightly in the breast of every inhabitant of that country (Poland), as pure and vivid as at the period of the insurrection; and all the foul schemes of the Emperor fail of success. (Applause.) In superficial and apparent success they may perhaps deceive him; but that success has no reality. (Hear.) An illustration of this is the following:—There was in the city of Wilna an institution for the education of Polish youth, and it was a very important and celebrated one. After the revolution, its abolition was one of the first acts of the Emperor, and the funds belonging to it, together with many of the professors, were removed to Kiew; a town which was formerly Russian altogether in its population and spirit, although it once belonged to Poland. However, it is now the seat of education for the Polish youth, who before were sent to Wilna; and what has happened shows how strong the spirit of nationality is,—how much stronger it is than the spirit of tyranny. When they come in collision, one must get the better of the other; and now Kiew, instead of being altogether Russian, has become a sort of head-quarters of Polish feeling—(applause)—nowhere does there prevail a tone of thought and feeling more thoroughly patriotic; and even the Russians placed there in authority over the Poles, have more or less imbibed their principles, and in some manner have adopted Polish sentiments. See, then, how powerless has been their attempt to destroy Polish nationality." (Applause.)—*Speech of Lord Dudley Stuart.*